



43 Fernando Botero

Medellín 1932 – lives in Paris and Pietrasanta

“Walking Woman in Profile”. 1983

Oil on canvas. 175 × 126 cm (68 7/8 × 49 5/8 in.).

Signed and dated lower right: Botero 83.

Catalogue raisonné: Hobi 1983 / 28. [3364] Framed.

Provenance

Private Collection, Berlin (acquired at Galerie Brusberg, Berlin)

EUR 350,000–450,000

USD 417,000–536,000

- Botero at the peak of his creative powers.
- An homage to the artist’s Colombian homeland.
- Botero’s typical focus on his model’s formidable corporeal presence.

Fernando Botero had already been a long-time resident of Paris by the time he created this painting. But the lady who we see passing in front of us decidedly is not a Parisienne. She is a Colombian woman dressed in her Sunday best, perhaps on her way to church. Her home neighborhood can be glimpsed in a small slice of background panorama on the left: It is unprepossessing, characterized by small one-storey houses. But this does not seem to have stopped the lady from putting herself together with the utmost care. She sports a charming floral dress and a festive little hat; her red closed-toe slippers, lipstick, and nail polish all have been colour-coordinated.

Botero, who long remained relatively overlooked by the critics and the public, always stayed true to the motifs from his South American homeland, even after his work began to be celebrated in retrospective shows. In 1983, the year from which our picture dates, the Metropolitan Museum in New York acquired his “Dancing in Colombia” for its collection. Today, the time has come to transcend the hegemony of Western art historical scholarship and to re-evaluate points of view that had been forgotten or intentionally relegated to the margins.

Of course one could counter that Botero himself has come to be firmly anchored in the Western artistic canon. But this is only partially true: While many of his compositions are indeed rooted in Western art, the voluminous physicality and realism of his figures stand in stark contrast to the aesthetic sensibility that prevailed in the West during the latter half of the 20th century.

And if Botero’s topics and the way he depicts them sometimes may strike us as naive, does this not also bespeak a certain helplessness on our part when we try to understand something unusual and foreign? While the lady’s sense of chic makes no concession to conventional fashion, testifying to her independence in questions of taste, it also showcases her formidable strength and presence – which Botero brings out so warmly and admiringly. What we see here is not only a self-assured woman, but also an artist at the peak of his creative powers.

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